

TO BOLDLY

... back to where it all began.

Director JJ Abrams took command of the Federation Starship Enterprise having never been a STAR TREK fan. However, his fresh approach has sent the phenomenal sci-fi franchise back into warp drive, winning the approval of Trekkies and newcomers alike.

Hey JJ. Is it true you were never a *Star Trek* fan and if so, how did you deal with the hardcore *Star Trek* fans who may have been upset by that?

JJ ABRAMS: It is true. Yes, I was never a fan of *Star Trek* and one of our producers had never seen *Star Trek* – ever. But, then we had Bob Orci as a producer-writer, who inhales *Star Trek* with his every breath. He lives for *Star Trek*. He knows so many arcane details about the show he would win a *Star Trek* trivia contest. We had this crazy balance in the five producers we had. Bob knew what stories would offend the hardcore fans.

Some Trekkies were upset you didn't cast the original Captain Kirk, William Shatner, in the movie...

I knew there would always be a core group of fans offended because we cast someone other

than William Shatner to play Captain Kirk. We could not cast William Shatner to play a 25-year-old Kirk. That would be difficult. We knew some people would not buy into that. To them, I say 'Don't see the movie. You'll just get angry. It is not Shatner playing Kirk so I apologise'. I do think we were lucky to have someone like Bob Orci to make us honest and guide

us to make a movie that is not in any way offensive to fans of *Trek* and actually show them scenes that were referenced in the TV series but have not been shown before. There are tons of references to things, some more overt than others, that embrace what has come before, so it is only the absolute purists – for whom anything other than the original TV series is some sort of affront – who would be upset. The irony is, of course, *Star Trek* is inherently this optimistic vision – we are exploring not conquering. So, for people to be offended by an honouring of what Gene Roddenberry created is hard to reconcile.

How creative could you be with the story?

We came up with a story that was consistent with *Star Trek*, but at the same time it gave us free reign to tell a new story.

One of the choices you made was to have plenty of humour in *Star Trek*. Why is that?

Yeah. Well, I thought if we don't put humour in, the movie people will find humour in the movie. Do you know what I mean (laughs). We had to make humour from the characters and situations and luckily we had a really funny cast with Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Zoe Saldana and even Karl Urban. I first thought 'Oh, here comes Karl Urban the Bourne killer and Lord of the Rings'. But literally he came in and was really funny. He was funnier than everyone else. Luckily, without it being a parody, we injected a bunch of wit into the movie that eliminated the *Galaxy Quest* pitfall.

JJ explains the *Star Trek* concept to the cast.



GO...

You are considered one of Hollywood's most original minds, but your last two films as director – *Mission: Impossible III* and *Star Trek* – are movies based on TV series. Why have you taken this path?

(Laughs) It is funny isn't it? Everything I have done in TV and movies before *Star Trek* and *Mission: Impossible III* were original ideas. I was asked by Tom Cruise to direct *Mission: Impossible III*. I was thrilled to do it because it was Tom. The last thing I thought I would be doing after that was to direct another sequel to a movie based on a TV series. I just never thought it would happen. Yet, when I read the *Star Trek* script, I was compelled with the story of these two lost souls literally on different planets who have a hugely contentious relationship, but then come together and by the end of the film become the characters you care about. I was compelled to do it not because it was *Star Trek*, a franchise, or it was established. It was the script. What I also found a challenge was that you could actually argue that *Star Trek* hasn't done well recently, so you would not instantly say, 'Yeah, that's going to be a huge hit'. It was a huge challenge.

But it ended up being a huge box office success. You must be happy you revived the franchise, just as Christopher Nolan did with *Batman*.

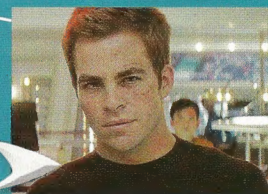
Yeah. That was a big part of the attraction to me. I was interested in seeing if I, someone who was never interested in *Star Trek*, could make a *Star Trek* movie I was interested in. I met Chris Nolan before he did the first *Batman* movie. That guy wasn't making that movie for a business deal. He loved *Batman*. He had a point of view that was so clear and passionate and his movie reflected that. Warner Bros. was very lucky to get him because I'm sure they had a business idea in mind and they got to marry *Batman* with a completely inspired artist. So, whether you like the movie or not, you know Chris was making it to tell a story. Not to make money. So for *Star Trek*, the only reason I did it was because I loved the script and if I didn't direct it then every day I would be jealous of the person who did. I'd go to the set and say, 'Why didn't I do this?' I showed the script to my wife who is not a *Star Trek* fan and she said 'You have to do this story'.

THE ENTERPRISE CREW - THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

Star Trek introduces the crew of the Starship Enterprise when they're still young ambitious rookies, poised to boldly go where no-one has gone before. One of the new film's primary strengths is in its casting: you can believe that Chris Pine will one day grow up to be the womanising William Shatner; brooding Zachary Quinto is a perfect fit for logical Leonard Nimoy's pointy Vulcan ears; and Kiwi Karl Urban channels the mannerisms, vocal inflections and quirks of resident medic DeForest Kelley, to name but a few. Here then is STACK's before and after guide to the Federation's finest.



James T. Kirk: Originally played by the great William Shatner, Chris Pine channels the Shat-man's courageous and womanising ways.



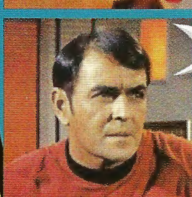
Spock: Originally played by Leonard Nimoy (who cameos in the new film). *Heroes* star Zachary Quinto is the young Vulcan.



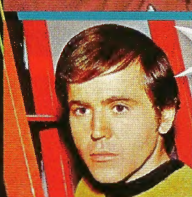
Bones McCoy: Originally played by the late DeForest Kelley, Kiwi Karl Urban is perfect as the ambitious young ship's doctor.



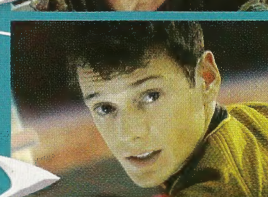
Hikaru Sulu: Originally played by George Takei and now by Harold from the *Harold & Kumar* films, aka John Cho.



Scotty: Originally played by the late James Doohan, *Shaun of the Dead*'s Simon Pegg is an inspired choice as the engineer miracle worker.



Pavel Chekov: Originally played by Walter Koenig, Anton Yelchin plays the younger Russian. (And also young Kyle Reese in *Terminator Salvation*)



Uhura: Originally played by Nichelle Nichols, now its upcoming *Avatar* star Zoe Saldana as the Communications Officer.

